

Attorney Docket No. 23607.00

IN THE APPLICATION  
OF  
DEAN A. MCKENZIE  
FOR A  
MAIL DELIVERY INDICATOR

LITMAN LAW  
OFFICES, LTD.  
P.O. BOX 15035  
ARLINGTON, VA 22215  
(703) 486-1000



13281 U.S. PTO

MAIL DELIVERY INDICATOR

**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION**

5 This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/511,656, filed October 17, 2003.

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

10 **1. FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

15 The present invention generally relates to an apparatus that indicates when mail has been delivered to a mailbox. More particularly, the apparatus can be seen from both the back and the front of the mailbox with which the apparatus is used.

**2. DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATED ART**

20 Mailbox indicators that indicate when mail has been deposited in a mailbox are well known in the related art. These mail indicators can range in complexity from being very simple to those that require complicated electronics. Some of the simpler mail indicators are also reflected in the related art.

United States Patent Application Publication No. 25  
2001/0000108 written by Perry and published on April 5, 2001,

5 outlines the use of a mail delivery signal kit, which includes a magnet, which can be mounted on the side or face of a mailbox door. There is also a tethering device which is anchored to a portion of the mailbox, a stopper constructed of a metallic material which will connect to the magnet and which can be attached to one end of the tether and a visual indicator device which can be retained on the tethering device, which is adapted to be stopped by the stopper attached to the tethering device.

10 U.S. Pat. No. Des. 260,319 issued to Kuntz, Jr. on August 18, 1981, outlines the use of an ornamental design for a mailbox signal.

15 U.S. Pat. No. Des. 356,428 issued to Piatkowski et al. on March 14, 1995, outlines the use of an ornamental design for a mailbox signal.

U.S. Pat. No. Des. 457,706 issued to Teichelman on May 21, 2002, outlines the ornamental design for a device for attachment to a mailbox for use in indicating the delivery of mail.

20 U.S. Pat. No. 2,609,787 issued to Lawson on September 9, 1952, outlines the use of a dual signaling device to assist in mail collection and delivering activities, which are of great benefit to the owner of a mailbox in assuring himself that the mail carrier has been to the mailbox to either pick up mail or to deliver incoming mail, as the case may be.

25 U.S. Pat. No. 2,707,075 issued to Van Duzer on April 26, 1955, outlines the use of a novel signal member for a mailbox which will automatically move to a clear signaling position visible to the eye both from the front and rear of the mailbox

upon the opening of the mailbox door by the mail carrier when he or she deposits mail therein.

U.S. Pat. No. 2,815,167 issued to Bailes et al. on December 3, 1957, outlines the use of a rural mailbox involving a door-actuated signal for indicating a deposit of mail in the mailbox by a mailman.

U.S. Pat. No. 3,426,966 issued to Lay on February 11, 1969, outlines the use of a trough-like member that is structurally integral with the door of a rural mailbox which has its mouth directed upwardly when the door is closed to normally retain an elongated, cylindrical body secured to the mailbox by an elongated transversely flexible member. When the mailbox door is opened by a mail carrier, the support member mouth will be tilted downward to allow the body to gravitate from the support and to dangle from the transversely flexible member to provide visual indication that the mailbox door has been opened.

U.S. Pat. No. 3,547,070 issued to Schuh on December 15, 1970, outlines the use of a signal attachment for a mailbox having a hinged door with a signal plate attached to one end of a chain, the other end of which is attached to an external mounting of the mailbox. The signal plate is adapted to be manually set in an inconspicuous position and frictionally held between the flange of the door and a sidewall portion of the mailbox.

U.S. Pat. No. 4,138,056 issued to Sherrill on February 6, 1979, outlines the use of a signal device in the form of a coil type spring with an elongated end thereon for fitting under the lip of the door of a rural type mailbox when the door is in a

closed position. Intermediate to the end of the elongated portion is an enlarged portion preferably in the form of a ball to increase the visibility of the device.

U.S. Pat. No. 4,821,953 issued to Poloha on April 18, 1989, 5 outlines the use of a mailbox signaling apparatus for use on both rural type and residential type mailboxes. The apparatus includes a suspension unit having a support arm and at least one elongated slot and a signal unit including a signal member attached to the suspension unit, which is provided with an attachment ring that is dimensioned to be selectively received 10 over the support arm and within the slot.

U.S. Pat. No. 5,284,295 issued to Steinfeldt on February 8, 1994, outlines the use of a mailbox delivery signal device with a signal ball of aerodynamic configuration tethered to a support 15 bracket mounted to the door of the mailbox. The support bracket includes a planar support member, which extends perpendicularly to the mailbox door and includes a circular hole formed therethrough having a diameter smaller than the diameter of the signal ball.

U.S. Pat. No. 6,053,404 issued to Jefferson et al. on April 20 25, 2000, outlines the use of an automatic signaling device to be used with a standard rural mailbox to indicate that the door has been opened when a mail carrier puts mail in the mailbox. The primary components of the device have a signal flag, including a helical spring and a signal plate for attaching to the top end of 25 the spring, a mounting bracket for mounting the helical spring to

the door of the mailbox and a retaining bracket attached to the mailbox top.

Great Britain Patent Application No. 2,040,678 granted to Sherrill on September 3, 1980, outlines the use of a signal device in the form of a coil type spring with an elongated end thereon for fitting under the lip of the door of a rural type mailbox when the door is in the closed position. Intermediate to the end of the elongated portion is an enlarged portion preferably in the form of a ball to increase the visibility of the device. The end of the coil spring opposite the elongated portion has a provision for securing the same to the side of the standard rural type mailbox.

Although each of these patents and patent applications outline the use of novel and useful devices, what is really needed is a mailbox delivery indicator that can be seen from the front and the back of a mailbox. Such a mailbox delivery indicator would address such a need that is in the marketplace, particularly with distant rural mailboxes.

None of the above inventions and patents, taken either singly or in combination, is seen to describe the instant invention as claimed. Thus a mail delivery indicator solving the aforementioned problems is desired.

25

LITMAN LAW  
OFFICES, LTD.  
P.O. BOX 15035  
ARLINGTON, VA 22215  
(703) 486-1000

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention is a mail delivery indicator for a mailbox with a door with a lower corner and a side that is facing towards a user's home or establishment. The mail delivery indicator has a signal holder bracket that is attached to the lower corner of the mailbox, an eyelet that is attached on the side of the mailbox adjacent to the lower corner of the mailbox where the signal holder bracket is attached, a signal ball that indicates when the mailbox door is opened and a tether line with a proximal end and a distal end, connecting the distal end with the signal ball. There is also a second embodiment for mailboxes that can be viewed from the back as well.

Accordingly, it is a principal object of the invention to indicate when mail has been delivered to a mailbox that is positioned in view of a home or establishment.

It is another object of the invention to indicate when mail has been delivered to a mailbox positioned away from the view of a home or an establishment.

It is a further object of the invention to provide an inexpensive and simple way to indicate when mail has been delivered to a mailbox.

Still another object of the invention is to provide an easily installable mailbox indicator.

It is an object of the invention to provide improved elements and arrangements thereof for the purposes described

which is inexpensive, dependable and fully effective in accomplishing its intended purposes.

These and other objects of the present invention will become readily apparent upon further review of the following specification and drawings.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is an environmental, perspective view of a mail delivery indicator according to the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a side perspective view of the first embodiment of the mail delivery indicator for a mailbox positioned in view of a home or establishment.

Fig. 3 is a side perspective view of the second embodiment of the mail delivery indicator for a mailbox positioned away from a home or an establishment.

Fig. 4 is a front perspective view of a third embodiment of the mail delivery indicator for a mailbox indicator positioned in front of or behind a mailbox.

Similar reference characters denote corresponding features consistently throughout the attached drawings.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The invention in a first embodiment is a mail delivery indicator 10 for a mailbox MB with a door with a lower corner and

a side, that is facing towards a user's home or establishment, as is depicted in Fig. 1.

The first embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 10 comprises a signal holder bracket 20 that is attached to the lower corner of the mailbox MB, an eyelet 30 that is attached on the side of the mailbox MB adjacent to the lower corner of the mailbox MB where the signal holder bracket 20 is attached and a signal ball 40 that indicates when the mailbox MB door is opened.

The first embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 10 further comprises a tether line 50 with a proximal end 52 and a distal end 54, connecting the proximal end 52 with the signal ball 40 and a stopper 60 that is threaded with the distal end 54 of the tether line 50 through the eyelet 30 to hold the distal end 54 of the tether line 50 at the eyelet 30, the signal ball 40 will fall out of the signal holder bracket 20 when the mailbox MB door is opened and hang down from the tether line 50, thereby indicating to the user that the mailbox MB door has been opened.

The first embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 10 also utilizes nuts and bolts (not shown) to attach the signal holder bracket 20 to the lower corner of the mailbox MB that is most visible to be seen from a user's home or establishment. When the signal ball 40 of the first embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 10 is resting in the signal holder bracket 20, the

first embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 10 indicates that the mailbox **MB** door has not been opened. The first embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 10 is designed for use for a mailbox **MB** with a door positioned in view from a user's home or establishment.

There is also a second embodiment which is mail delivery indicator 70, intended to be used for a mailbox **MB** door being positioned away from a user's home or establishment. The second embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 70 has a second signal ball 80 that is located to the rear of the user's mailbox **MB** to be more visible from the front and back of the user's mailbox **MB**. This is an improvement from the first embodiment of the mailbox delivery indicator 10, which can only be seen from the front of the mailbox **MB**.

The second embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 70 is used in combination with a mailbox **MB** with a door and a side that is facing away from a user's home or establishment. The second embodiment of the mailbox delivery indicator 70 comprises a signal holder bracket 20 that is attached to the lower corner of the mailbox **MB** and a tether line 50 with a proximal end 52 and a distal end 54. The second embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 70 further comprises a first signal ball 40 that is attached to the proximal end 52 of the tether line 50 and a second

signal ball 80 that is attached to the distal end 54 of the tether line 50, the first signal ball 40 disposed in the signal holder bracket 20 thereby indicating to the user that the mailbox **MB** door has remained closed.

5       The second embodiment of the mailbox delivery indicator 70 also has a tube 90 with a front end 92 and a back end 94 that is threaded with the tether line 50 and is attached to the side of the mailbox **MB**, the tether line 50 being movable from within the tube 90 from the gravitational forces exerted from the first 10 signal ball 40 and the second signal ball 80. There is also a first stopper 100 provided with the first signal ball 40 and a second stopper 110 provided with the second signal ball 80 to cushion any counter gravitational force on the front end 92 and the back end 94 of the tube 90 that might be exerted by the first 15 signal ball 40 and the second signal ball 80.

      The second embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 70 can indicate when the mailbox **MB** door is opened and when the first signal ball 40 falls out of the signal holder bracket 20 and exerts a counter gravitational force raising the second signal ball 80 to the back end 94 of the tube 90 and indicating that 20 the mailbox **MB** door has been opened. The first signal ball 40 must be heavier than the second signal ball 80 in order for the

second embodiment of the mailbox delivery indicator 70 to work properly.

The third embodiment of the mailbox delivery indicator 120 involves the use of a different signal holder bracket 130 than the signal holder bracket 20 used in the first embodiment 10 and the second embodiment 70. This is illustrated in Fig. 4. The signal holder bracket 130 used with the third embodiment of the mailbox delivery indicator 120 is attached to the lower portion of the mailbox **MB** door and extends horizontally past either side of the mailbox **MB**, while holding the signal ball 40 and making the signal ball 40 visible from either the front of the mailbox **MB** or the back of the mailbox **MB**. Like the first embodiment 10 and the second embodiment 70, a signal guard 140 can be provided on the ring portion of the signal holder bracket 132 that holds the signal ball 40. The signal guard 140 can be easily clipped onto and taken off of the ring portion of the signal holder bracket 132 that holds the signal ball 40 with two fitted clips 142 provided on the signal guard 140. The signal guard 140 can also be used with a signal holder bracket 20 from the first embodiment 10 or the second embodiment 70 to prevent something from inadvertently knocking off the signal ball 40 while the mailbox **MB** door is closed.

Fig. 4 also illustrates a leveling slot 150 on the bolt 152 of the signal holder bracket 130 which can help level and adjust

the signal holder bracket 130 in the event that the signal holder bracket 130 is not perfectly horizontally level. A similar leveling slot can also be provided for bolts of the signal holder bracket 20 for the first embodiment 10 and the second embodiment 70 of the invention as well.

Use of the first embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 10, the second embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 70 and the third embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 120 are straightforward. Once the mailbox **MB** has been opened and mail is deposited inside the mailbox **MB**, the first embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 10 and the third embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 120 can be easily reset by simply returning the signal ball 40 back onto the ring portion of the signal holder bracket 132. Similarly, indicator 70 is reset easily by returning the first signal ball 40 onto the signal holder bracket 20.

The first embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 10, the second embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 70, the third embodiment of the mail delivery indicator 120 and their respective parts and components, come in separate kits (not shown) with instructions on how to install any embodiment. All kits can be used on conventional mailboxes **MB**, whether the mailbox **MB** is viewed from the front or the back of a user's home

or establishment. All kits require the use of basic hand tools to install any embodiment of the invention.

It must be understood that the present invention is not limited to the embodiments described above, but encompasses any and all embodiments within the scope of the following claims.

5

LITMAN LAW  
OFFICES, LTD.  
P.O. BOX 15035  
ARLINGTON, VA 22215  
(703) 486-1000